

## THE SYRUP MAN'S FINE CAR

by Robert W. Maddox

June 14, 1975--- Watching it round the curb this afternoon was a lot like the first child that leaves for college. I sold it today to my best friend, Ed Stanley for \$450 after a piston ring overhaul in my driveway over the last couple months. Recently, there was hardly enough compression to keep it cranked up much less running like the old car was accustomed. So, either overhaul the engine “shady tree” style this spring or call a salvage yard wrecker to move it. I could not bear the emotion for the latter but I knew about the nasty, grueling work ahead if the choice was the former. With my college buddy Ed rounding the last curve of the road heading out of Springbrook Drive, I turned sideways to the rusting chain link fence. A flood of cascading tears brought forward eventful memories of my past with it. Walking back into our little kitchen, my wife Diane noticed as all wives do, a melancholic demeanor. She said, “I think it would be better if you went back to the bedroom for a two hour nap”-- I did just that, hoping for a reprieve from my fretful and grieving mood. There were too many recollections of my long partnership with it, the “Green Machine” that deflated my emotional level today.

November 28, 1959--- “VADIE-- Vadie, stop it, git it off me right now!— Have a little mercy man, you have got me dripping wet back here”. When you are washing cars in winter months, gas station attendants are always “spray peppered down to their uncomfortable ice packed britches, wool socks and heavy leather boots”. On the other hand a arousing soaking by Vadie Peoples holding a one inch diameter commercial water hose in summer months would be a tremendous job benefit for a wash rack man-- That's me, but this ain't summer fer shore. -- “Now listen to me Vadie, Mr. Patterson is particular about this big ole car. -- I'm gonna scrub this rear whitewall real good for the Syrup Man, then you hose it down with me out of the way, alright,--- I'll put on the fender skirt outside”. Vadie said, “sorry little boss for the water hose, didn't know you was back there.”

Vadie Peoples was one of dad's first employees. He was a short, thin Black man with a houseful of kids, a good wife and a loyal employee until Arvin Industries came to town. The most salient thing I remember about Vadie was the day he almost got his head removed by a commercial tire rim. I was standing nearby while Vadie was airing up the huge tire. Suddenly-- Bazooka shell explosion!-- wham/boom!! The truck rim cleared Vadie's forehead by a mere 3 inches— the power of the tire air pressure lifted the steel rim outer cover 50 feet and landed on top of our gas station roof. Dad felt so bad for what happened that he told Vadie to go home and relax for a couple days before coming back to work. He handed Vadie some extra cash and told him not to worry about being away from his job. Vadie Peoples cheated death that fine day and it affected all of us emotionally at the gas station for a week or so. Our family loved Vadie Peoples. In my teenage immaturity I tried out all sorts of pranks on Vadie at the gas station but he handled that like the gentle person he was.

Earlier in the day Dad sent me to Golden Eagle Table Syrup Company, a couple blocks away to pick up Mr. Victor Patterson's car and bring it back for service and a wash. A 16 year old returning the syrup man's car back to our gasoline station seemed special that morning. I took great care to park

it away from traffic until we were ready to service it for the inventor and patent holder of Golden Eagle Table Syrup. Mr. Victor Patterson, Sr. was a big name in this part of the country because of several facts. First, his Golden Eagle Table Syrup, no doubt was a very fine culinary product sold in several southern states. Second, Mr. Patterson's name was well known statewide because of a radio personality, a fellow named Joe Rumore of Birmingham's WVOK, located on old Highway 11. The high wattage radio station could be found maybe four miles west of Downtown and Legion Field. Being such a powerful radio station it could beam AM signals from Huntsville almost to the gulf coast. This was choice radio advertisement for any business and Joe Rumore knew how to say the right words about most any product.

Every sunrise, our family ate mama's scratch biscuits saturated with pure Land of Lakes butter, followed by a ample covering of Mr. Patterson's famous product, Golden Eagle Table Syrup. I always wondered why it was labeled as a table syrup because I could eat it in bed, on a car seat or most anywhere else. In Northwest Alabama, if you didn't "gobble down" Golden Eagle Syrup for breakfast you would hear talk about our women folk baking fine pecan pies. Mr. Patterson's pie recipe was printed on the backside of the bottle with easy directions. I figured if you didn't "drown your biscuits with the syrup", add it in with turnip greens,, collards, baked beans or Kellog's Corn Flakes there must be something "terribly wrong in your life."

#### **FOREIGN RELATIONS AND GOLDEN EAGLE SYRUP\***

With the assistance of a good married woman I maneuvered our guest, a Russian Infantry veteran and foreign exchange student to become obsessed with the syrup man's concoction of sweetness. We offered him the best of rib eye and fried chicken but the scratch biscuits and table syrup became first and last. He almost refused to get on the airplane back to Russia unless he had a sufficient supply of Golden Eagle Table Syrup. So naturally, being a good citizen, I avoided a full blown foreign relations fiasco and gave him several jars to take back to Minx, Russia, " back home in the USSR". I always wondered if customs let him out of the United States with the syrup or if the Red Army enjoyed it. The Patterson family would have been amused knowing they had a huge sales market in Russia.

#### **HISTORICAL STUFF NEAR THE SYRUP PLANT\***

In the 1950's/1960's I recall certain employees/staff of the Golden Eagle plant giving away small jars of the syrup to folks in the community as gifts, especially on holidays like Thanksgiving, Christmas and the like. Mr. Herbert Newell, Sr. and Victor Patterson, Jr. dropped by our gas station often with those samples. You could bet that very few local residents turned down the little Golden Eagle Syrup jars handed out. Our family and some of the gas station employees got our share of them. Lots of folks would put the little 4 ounce jars in their Christmas stockings with oranges, apples and other things like candy bars in the 1940s/1950s. Christmas was different in the 1950's to say the least. The Christmas advertising season, for goodness sakes did not start until at least the first week of December! You bought your "Santa Claus" at Fowler Hardware, Central Drug Store, Western Auto, Hodges Department Store, Gulletts, Gravlee's, The Quality Shop, Garrisons

Furniture, Stermans Department Store, The Palace Gift Shop, Campbell's Jewelry, Joe's Record Bar, Elmore's 5 & 10 cent store, Hi-Lo Dollar Store, Central Drug Store, Yellow Front Store, Terry Drugs, Roberts-Nichols Hardware or Robbie's on Temple Avenue. Anderson Hardware was located on Columbus Street directly across from Michaels Shoe Shop and they had a lot of toys in the Christmas season.

Let's return to Joe Rumore and Mr. Patterson. Joe was the morning disc jockey and radio celebrity for Birmingham's WVOK radio in the 1950s to very early 1960s. He featured a "down home spun" program that daily featured family members, including most of his kids and occasionally his wife, Ruth. I never knew a radio celebrity quite like Joe Rumore that conducted daily shows from his house. Joe had a younger brother who owned a record shop in downtown Birmingham and his business would be advertised occasionally for the latest in single 45s and record albums of that time. One of Joe's favorite commercials every day was Golden Eagle Table Syrup, which Joe called, "the Pride of Alabam". Most folks "listening in" thought Joe Rumore had a huge role in the marketing and success of the Fayette syrup company. Accordingly, by the mid 1950's Golden Eagle Syrup had a tremendous sales market in Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee, carrying the "Pride of Alabam".

Mr. Patterson actually began his syrup business with a formula at his home about 1928, shortly before the advent of the Great Depression. It is reported earlier that on October 28, 1928 Mr. and Mrs. Patterson sold the first can of their corn syrup and honey mixture. Interesting enough, I am unable to determine the first customer to buy a can or a glass jar of the syrup from Mr. and Mrs. Patterson. The earlier glass jars had a labeling, "Buy the best at no greater cost" with Mr. Victor S. Patterson's name on the jar's bottom.

Sometime around 1939 the Patterson's moved the business from their home into a modern brick building on Market Street, a few yards Southwest of Fayette City Hall, The City Jail and the Downtown Fire Department. The jail and the fire station were connected back to back at the time, located across the street from Mrs. Sue Brotherton's Pan Am Cafe. The jail as I remember was a terrible looking place from what I remember in the late 1950's and 1960's. Mr. Patterson insisted on the finest of stainless metal machinery, large blenders, mixers, pans and other food service equipment to process his patented recipe in the new plant. I could sense that unless you had special credentials, a visitor to the plant was usually confined to the business office. There was needed security at the Syrup plant primarily for Health Department regulations. There were four elevated windows on the buildings southside and a large truckbay entrance including the business office door on the west side. The East side of the building contained one door for employee entrance and it joined a lot containing used cars of Mr. N.T. Mothershed's Chevrolet dealership.

#### **CONSULTATION WITH FAMILY MEMBER:**

Mr. Herbert M. Newell, III, a Tuscaloosa attorney and grandson of The Syrup Man indicated that Mr. Victor S. Patterson Sr. was born January 11, 1895 and passed this life on December 24, 1960. He was a World War I Army Infantry veteran, grateful to serve his country. He was survived by his wife, Lucy Bobo Patterson who died on December 21, 1972. As a husband myself, I cannot help but believe that Mrs. Patterson played a significant and poignant role with her spouse, especially in the early years of the business. Other survivors were: Son, Victor S. Patterson, Jr. - born April 20, 1920

/ died April 14,1988 --- Daughter, Jeannie Patterson Newell, born July 17, 1924 / died December 15, 2010. Other survivors include Herbert M. Newell, Jr., born June 20, 1925 / died October 9, 2000--- Richard S. Patterson, born April 6,1952 / died December 31, 1993 and Mr. Herbert M. Newell, III, presently residing in Tuscaloosa, Al.

Mr. Newell told me that in 1965 changes were made in the building, planned by his parents and Victor Patterson, Jr. who were then partners in the corporation. At that time the office was located in the warehouse. You entered through the door by the delivery truck bay, went up steps to the warehouse floor and then straight across the warehouse to the office door. Next to the delivery truck bay was the door for large trucks. The employee entrance was in the rear of the building. \*\* (CONSULT CONCLUDED WITH MR. NEWELL OF TUSCALOOSA)

Maybe 35 yards directly south of the Syrup Plant on gravel pavement was what I remember to be a very blighted structure, housing a cafe in a used railroad passenger car. It was located a few yards east of the Southern Railroad Depot to further pinpoint it's location. This cafe was owned by a African American family, doing business the best they could in the segregated South of the 1940's/ 1950s. "I would put my money down" on this railroad passenger car as being the former "Trolley Diner" alluded to later discussion. This cafe was not in business by 1956. I always wanted to eat there since I knew they offered tempting BBQ along with "soul food sides" like okra, turnip greens, collards, baked beans and such.

I remember a firearm shooting in the summer of 1957 that occurred on the west or truck entrance side of the Syrup Plant. It seemed like a "Wild West, High Noon shootout" happening to me. The dude that got shot and wounded was a "giant of a fellow" with a rumored reputation of being a big bully around town. However, veteran police officer, Walt Sims was not one to be bullied or taken lightly. Officer Sims as I remember was somewhat short of statue, slight rotund build, graying hair and into his early 60s at the time of the altercation. He was a real old school lawman and a dedicated officer from my perspective. Walt was one of the officers that was on duty the night when "Granpa's Ponies" got loose in downtown Fayette a couple years later in a awful ice and snow storm. I was a "Safety patrol" student at the old Fayette Elementary school on North Temple Avenue and got to know officer Sims there as a child. Mrs. Locke Collins was principal at Fayette Elementary while I was there, a angel of a lady but she "ran a tight ship" for sure.

The "Bully" survived a gunshot to his abdomen thanks to Dr. Henry Hodo, a beloved surgeon and former World War II Navy Medic. Dr. Hodo was known as one of the best general surgeons in the Southeast and was honored by National and State Medical Associations. Fayette County was lucky to have him in practice. I give credit to Dr. Hodo, saving my father's life in the summer of 1953 when he was severely burned in a gasoline explosion at our Pan Am gasoline station. I would let Dr. Hodo do "brain surgery" on me because I thought he was a "cat's ankle" or none any better. Subsequently, after the "Bully" recovered from surgery a couple weeks later, he escaped from Fayette's new jail by the Courthouse and was captured in the City Cemetary near Five Points. I remember hearing from some of our customers that it became a struggle for law enforcement to apprehend the escapee since he was a extremely strong and large man. To my knowledge I do not remember the "Bully" ever being a law enforcement problem again in Fayette.

## **PART II**

### **BUSINESS CONTEMPORARIES OF THE SYRUP MAN NEARBY**

To the West of the Golden Eagle Plant on Market Street was Dobb's Antique Store, owned by Mr. Hap Dobbs and his wife. It was a very successful furniture store as I remember. The building is standing today, made of solid concrete block. It was built soon after the "devastating fire of 1911 that took everything with it" on Temple Avenue. Other business ventures near the Golden Eagle Plant & Southern Railway Depot to the West were pulpwood operations with Mr. Joe and/or Buford Dobbs. Buford was very active in the Civil Air Patrol and was our Civil Air Patrol Commandant for several years. As I remember, The Willingham family also had a timber/ pulpwood business on the East end of the rail line prior to or during this period. Rose Market and Weems Furniture rear entrance were directly across the street from Dobb's Antiques on Market Street.

The Roxie Theatre, owned by Mr. Robert "Bobby" Cobb was also on Market Street nearby, the present home of The Times-Record. It was not until after the Civil Rights legislation of the mid 1960's that Market Street was renamed Martin Luther King Street, the name it bears today. The intent of the above is historical so you can understand more clearly what was close to the syrup plant at the time. In those days the City of Fayette was known as one of the most progressive small cities in the State with a very large downtown business district including two movie theaters, The Richards on Temple Avenue and the Roxie Theatre on Market Street. M & M Chevrolet Company was directly North of the syrup plant, owned by Mr. N.T. Mothershed.

There were two other business operations that should be brought into the mix because they were located close and contemporary to Mr. Patterson's business. The first one was a Gulf Oil Distributorship owned by Mr. Jimmy Branyon, located a few yards south of the Southern Railroad tracks. Mr. Branyon eventually got into State politics, elected as District 16 State Representative and later elected as a State Senator for several Northwest Alabama Counties. Mr. Branyon worked very hard for his constituents during Big Jim Folsom and John Patterson's administrations. He was noted to be very popular with the people of his district. About a block East of the Syrup Plant was a Studebaker dealership on Aylette Street owned by Mr. Fuller Kimbrell, also heavily involved in State politics, elected as a State Senator and later picked by Gov. James "big jim" Folsom as his State Finance Director. After Gov. Folsom left office Mr. Kimbrell worked with Governor George Wallace which was beneficial to Fayette and West Alabama. Mr. Kimbrell in his 90's wrote two books pertaining to his long business and political life.

It is not an overstatement that both Mr. Branyon and Mr. Kimbrell were very progressive men who did much to improve roads and infrastructure for the areas they represented in Montgomery. I felt they were the type men who were in political office for all the right reasons. Mr. Kimbrell brought Fayette Concrete Company/FAYCO, a concrete/metal pipe plant to the City of Fayette in the early 1960's which was a big economic boost to the City.

Another business contemporary of Mr. Patterson was Mr. Bill Weems. He was the first that I knew selling new, slightly used furniture or any other items with "carrying charges", meaning interest on time. Vadie Peoples, my old washrack friend introduced me to that term one day after telling me about a used washing machine he bought from Mr. Weems. In 1939, Mr. Weems established a cafe

known as the “Trolley Diner”, located only a few yards north of the old U. S. Post Office on Temple Avenue. The “Trolley Dinner” was a converted aluminum railroad passenger car about 60 feet long and 15 feet wide. My sweet mother, Winnie Bobo Maddox, as a 16 year old worked there as a waitress in 1940. The following is what she had to say about Mr. Weems:

- “I remember that in the mid to late 1930's Bill Weems had a dairy business a few miles south of town before he married Genevie Weems. They got the idea of a short order cafe but I don't know anything about the passenger car purchase or how it got moved to Temple Avenue. He hired me when I was 16 years old and I worked as a waitress doing whatever needed to be done. It was depression time and I was glad to get a job. I thought that Mr. Weems was always easy to work for and would help out when things got real busy and so would Genevie. A cheeseburger with fries was .25 cents and a cup of coffee for a nickel then.
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- I always recollect at the end of the day he would take a seat on a counter stool, take out pencil and paper to check the sales/expenses for the day. Mr. Weems in my opinion was a very shrewd businessman. At the end of World War II he began experimenting in the furniture business on a small scale. Genevie would help him since she had good skills in interior decoration, etc. By 1948 Bill and Genevie were full time in the furniture business with a complete offering of new or slightly used furniture with accessories. They also were known to build several homes that Genevie would design and decorate. They eventually built a large and beautiful home in the Lawrence Mill Community. Mr. and Mrs. Weems were faithful members of the Temple Avenue Church of Christ. I can still pick up the scent of the “Trolley Diner” cheeseburgers when I walk or drive by that place today . Genevie would go to a customers house and help them pick out furniture and accessories to match the décor of a room. They were really fine people I thought”.

The Syrup company at the end of World War II included Mr. Patterson's son, Victor Patterson Jr. and his wife Mary Lou Patterson. Soon thereafter, he would bring in his son in law, Mr. Herbert Newell, Sr. a World War II Navy veteran. It should be noted that Jeannie P. Newell, The Syrup Man's daughter came into the business as early as 1942, so it naturally evolved into a family managed business.

Some of the early employees of the Golden Eagle Company were Mr. Joe H. Coons, Mr. Tom Bobo and Dempsey Poe.

Mr. Victor Patterson, Sr. from my prospective seemed reserved, introverted but very focused in demeanor. I pictured him functioning as a focused, disciplined, highly organized manager, a “stickler” to detail. In other words he insisted on high quality in his product and the same from his employees. He was noted to come to work early, leave late afternoon, then come home to his wife and the evening meal . Mr. Patterson was not known to be a “civic clubber”, leading his life growing his business except for time spent with immediate family members or stewardship at Fayette's First Baptist Church. He seemed to come across as a matter of fact personality type, leaning toward a need for privacy with his family in his personal life. Perhaps this was due to difficulties/stress of building his business during the worst of the great depression. Maybe it had a lot to do with his serious responsibility as the CEO of a major business and employees that looked to him for job stability. We, in the service station business were involved in the basic care of their

automobiles . Sometimes the Patterson's and Newells would take long business or pleasure trips. We took great pride in pleasing the Patterson family and all our customers. In a small town, if you didn't do that someone else would.

I found Mr .Herbert Newell, Jr. easier to relate to, more friendly in terms of personal relationships. Mr. Newell seemed to be a guy that was interested in learning about what was going on in your life and what your plans were for the future. His son, "Little Herbie", as he was known by most folks in town, came by our gas station with his father very often. As a matter of fact "Herbie" won a contest at our gas station offered by Humble Oil Company, a giant stuffed Tiger. The stuffed Tiger was huge. The local paper, Northwest Alabamian, featured little "Herbie", shortly after winning the contest, holding the Tiger with my dad. Mr. and Mrs. Newell were a blessing to West Alabama with their avid genealogy hobby, which later turned into detailed books and periodicals on the history of Fayette County, surrounding counties, documented professionally. Mr. and Mrs Newell were extremely active and successful in the Southern Baptist Association & the Fayette First Baptist Church. Mr. Newell was also very active in Fayette civic club activities. Herbert M. Newell III, "LittleHerbie", would later become a successful business man/attorney in Tuscaloosa. The entire Patterson family gave much back to the local community and I always strongly felt their iconic stature in their presence.

### **PART III**

#### **"THE SYRUPS MAN'S BIG GREEN MACHINE"**

Let's get down to business with Mr. Patterson's car, bought new. It was special ordered from the Nichols Oldsmobile Dealership, north of the old Whitley House and east of the Pool Hall. Now you don't go to a car dealer in 1954 and buy a new car off the lot because that's just not the way things were done then. I would estimate that almost 50% of new cars sold at that time were special ordered. Mr. Patterson carefully chose his 1954 luxury 98 Oldsmobile with almost every option that was available including factory air conditioning. He wanted the short block 4.3 liter V8 General Motors engine that came out in 1954 for Cadillac. This engine would "wind up" 195 horsepower with a 4 barrel Rochester carburator. It had great torque and power when stepping on the accelerator in it's passing gear. This "Baby" was a real "road warrior". Gasoline was cheap. So if you put the " pedal to the metal" that was alright too , fuel efficiency wasn't much in vogue.

It was two toned in color with the top light cream and the remaining body a beautiful dark empire green. The big car had a transmission with three forward gears-- L1, L2, L3 and Overdrive. That was unusual in 1954. It was matched with a rear axle ratio of 3.55:1. That meant a higher speed rear axle providing slightly higher gasoline mileage and less wear on the engine. It was fitted with factory air conditioning with very noticeable large plastic tubing in the rear window. There were four HVAC vents located over each door in the headliner. This dispersed cool air evenly to the car's interior, making it very comfortable for all passengers. The elegant seats were bench type with heavy piping, very plush, front and back with rayon/polyester blend material, easy to keep clean. The color of the seats were light olive, darker piping on the seams with low cut carpeting of a darker olive color and a slight charcoal tint mixed in.

One thing I always noticed when working on the car was a huge chrome horn rim that was located

to the inside of the steering wheel & with a slight amount of hand pressure it would blow or “honk”. It carried two separate ash trays and a extra cigar lighter on the dash but I never saw any signs of tobacco products. It was loaded with heavy chrome metal from front to back and the chrome “rocket eight” emblem was affixed on the front of the hood. The Oldsmobile 98 model was fitted with 15 inch wheels with heavy chrome hubcaps and the special 98 Olds insignia in the middle of the hubcap. Mr. Patterson ordered a special “98 classic key” for his car that had a large inscription with the capability of serving the trunk, doors and the ignition. The only option Mr. Patterson did not purchase on his order was power windows that GM offered the first time in the luxury model. This was a special automobile for a man who had been very successful in life. This car would “float” like being on a cloud at 65 -75 miles per hour. It had a very heavy feel in steering and suspension, a GM trademark in their higher end automobiles.

I remember especially in the summers he would motor by our gasoline station to and from work in that graceful green automobile, sometimes with Mrs. Patterson as a passenger. I always had the feeling that his wife really liked this vehicle almost as much as he did. On weekends you would occasionally see them together in the automobile and I always pictured the couple as being very close and fond of each other. Little did I ever dream one day that I, a greasy, teenage redneck gas station attendant would have the pleasure of being as close to that car as the CEO of the “Pride of Alabam”.

**MARCH 4, 1960**

Daddy, “Uncle Lewis said for me to come down to the junkyard this morning, says he's got something down there in the yard he wants us to look over”. Well, this was not exactly the kind of yard most folks think about when this particular word is brought up. Uncle Lewis had a awful looking yard, a “junkyard full of the raunchiest bunch of old wrecks I gazed over with clear 16 year old blue eyes”.

Uncle Lewis Bobo was a World War II veteran who helped to keep General Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army on the move in North Africa, Italy and later in the push into Berlin. What I am getting around to is that Corporal Lewis Bobo's military occupation title was truck/ jeep and half track mechanic. “Lord knows” what other kinds of vehicles he and his valient comrades kept running so the famous General with pearl handle pistols and his armor/infantry soldiers could take the fight to the Nazis day in/day out. Uncle Lewis only told me one story about the Big War, absolutely the most hilarious tale I ever heard. It was a afternoon in western Germany when by accident he captured a civilian, a German barber posing in full dress uniform as a Nazi SS Colonel. Uncle Lewis said he told the story to General Patton a few days later while his jeep was broke down. Patton leaned over the hood of his jeep and told him that was the “craziest thing he had ever heard in the war”. Apparently the Nazi officer was running for his life as Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was racing to Berlin and forgot his pants, boots and coat. Uncle Lewis gave out a raucous belly laugh saying, “I was the only corporal in the US Army never credited with singlehandedly capturing a disguised Nazi SS Colonel”.

Dad said, “Bobby, I've got to pick up Mr. Collins car--- get in the truck.-- as soon as we get back we will go down to Lewis's place.” ---I said “Alright dad, I'll bring back the service truck, then I want



you to go with me to see something down there at the yard." Pa said, "Son, I know what you want me to see down there, I've already seen the old flathead Ford-- later we can look this little car over to see if it would be a good fit". I was a ecstatic, happy boy hoping to lasso a salvaged car back to the gas station. I was proud that dad thought I was responsible enough to drive my first car and had sufficient knowledge to care for it.

### **"HEADING FOR THE JUNKYARD"**

I had saved \$60 over the course of last fall and winter working part time at the gas station. My uncle, Lewis Bobo owned a junkyard down on East Columbus Street and had promised to be on the "lookout" for a car I could buy that would be worth repair costs. When Dad and I got to the junkyard uncle Lewis was in his office trailer, always dressed in khaki pants and shirt. He had been out of the regular Army for several years and to me seemed to be a very striking, handsome man with coarse dark hair pulled back over a well tanned face.

Now to get to the yard, you took a right turn into Koster's Radiator Shop driveway and continued on gravel just a few yards. Down that way there wasn't much in the way of business except Vick's Pontiac Dealership, a huge tin cotton warehouse, a very blighted wooden motel across from Dr. Deal's Veterinary Office and Fayette Water Works. Collins Feed Mill was a little further down behind the junkyard as was the old Fayette Ice House. Yes, I said the old Fayette Icehouse, slightly west of the Cotton Mill Village. The junkyard did not have many late model wrecks since uncle Lewis had not been in business at that location very long. He made his money off of hubcaps, generators, starters, manual transmissions, radiators, electrical switches, etc.

Lewis said---" Yall come on down to the shed so I can show you this 1950 black Ford coupe my mechanic has just cranked up, runs pretty good I think, got a solid flathead engine for sure-- now, it needs some repair work-- yeah, brakes for sure, radiator hoses, a PCV valve-- I would get the dry rotted tires replaced right away but they are holding air". Dad had already seen the car and I sensed he could help me out with what it would take to make it safe for local use. I noticed that the gray cloth interior seats were in good shape but needed a good cleaning, the headliner was intact and the flooring was solid after I pulled back the rubber mat. Uncle Lewis said, " Boy that country music sounds good on your radio, that Patsy Cline can really belt it out". I said, "yes sir, I like her too but I like Elvis better. I said, -- "Uncle Lewis, I'll take it, will \$50 be enough? He said-- "Thats alright, but if you had offered \$40 you could have had it for that". I handed my good uncle \$50 cash, then dad and I put a chain to the old Ford and hauled it in to the gas station.

My cash was only the beginning of costs to get the Ford coupe safe to drive. Our mechanic, Doug Barnette started repairs with full brake overhaul, a rebuilt generator, new fan belts, radiator hoses, new ignition switch, tune up, four recapped tires and oil/transmission service. This totaled about \$250 but I had a safe car for \$300. I was very grateful and fortunate that my parents insisted that my first car be dependable. Time spent in my first vehicle was fun, adventurous and yet a covenant of mutual trust with them. My high school senior year were complete joyriding with my friends, Franklin, Jimmy O. over the "creepy holler bridge". I helped my parents transport my little sisters to elementary school and they thought "that was cool" not being in mother's vehicle. I ramped up the AM radio, sometimes picking up Joe Rumor talking about Mr. Patterson's syrup. It was also

important to take some time to escort a couple of pretty girlfriends in my “junkyard dog ford coupe”.

#### **PART IV “MY ELUSIVE DREAM”-- ( SO WE MOVED ON)**

by Country Recording Artist, Mr. Charley Rich

On a blistering humid day in August 1960 The Syrup Man drove in for gasoline. I was pumping .22 cent Amoco white gasoline carefully, watching “the big guy” meander into the station to sign the credit slip. I was not in a hurry to pump it fast because of gas expansion in late afternoon plus I wanted to tell him how much I admired his big green machine. Quite frankly, I was extremely fond of this car over the past couple years, having worked on it many times at the station. This probably seemed strange for a boy my age who would normally dream of owning the beautiful Ford Thunderbird, a cool Chevy Corvette or maybe even a sporty Mercury. School would be starting soon and this was my senior year.

By the time Mr. Patterson came out to get in the car I was cleaning his windshield. Like all customers, I asked him if he wanted me to check it under the hood. He said, “ Not today, it is alright, let that go”. I said, “ alright, hurry back to see us but I wanted to tell you what a great car you are driving”. He said, “ well son, I happen to like it a lot myself, probably the best car I have ever drove”. This was the last time I talked with Mr. Victor Patterson, Sr. because he died in December 1960 at a young age of 65, leaving behind his immediate family to continue the business operations. The 98 Oldsmobile was stored at Mrs. Patterson's home adjacent to Jay's Place near the Fayette Grammer School after Mr. Patterson passed away.

**JUNE 30, 1961**

Mama, working manager at Hi-Lo Dollar Store called: --”Bobby, come on up to the store, I need to talk to you about something. Everything is alright but I need you right now”. I told her that I had to wipe down Dr. Brietling's car windows and I would be right there. Musing over this summons seemed odd, somewhat out of character for her. My thoughts were obviously bad news or did she need help to lift some boxes that came in. The Hi-Lo Dollar Store was located in the old A&P Grocery Store next to Garrison Furniture Store, across from the Post Office on Temple.

When I got to the store about two blocks away from the gas station, Dad was sitting in the back office with her, Winston cigarette in hand. They beamed their usual gay facial expressions that “something was up”. They said they had a surprise in the back alley where the delivery trucks bring Hi-Lo merchandise on wood palates to be stocked. Dad said, “lets walk outside to see what we can find there”. They wanted me to go first, motioning to show the way. I pulled back the iron security rod, threw the latch. Parked directly in front of the door was the gorgeous 1954 empire green 98 Oldsmobile that I had worked on so many times. It had been freshly waxed with the summer sun reflecting brilliant light rays from the huge chrome grill and windshield. Dad looked at me, then Mama and said-- “ The 50 Ford coupe won't get you back and forth from Nashville this fall so I figured out a way to get you something that would”. He continued--” I went ahead and sold your Ford to the “Ragman” when I found out Mr. Patterson's car had been traded in. I bought it for \$600 last week and it has been at the Chevrolet Place used car lot ever since. I could have made several

hundred dollars on a couple offers to sell it. This is one car deal I could not and would not sell to turn a profit. I've got you insured on it for the next year. It only has 38,000 miles, our mechanic has checked everything out-- it is ready to go. ----- Let's drive up to 5 points, so get behind the wheel". I thought I saw tears in my parents eyes as they got in the car, dad sitting as the front seat passenger. Maybe the tears was because I was leaving for college in a couple months. To them, it meant accepting and dealing with the emotional transition from my childhood days all good parents experience. The Green Machine's air conditioner felt great on this hot summer day and my parents were very happy they could make this happen. > "SO WE MOVED ON"

#### **A NASHVILLE CAT! MUSIC CITY, USA**

One Saturday night in November 1961 I got lucky on a great parking place on Broadway near the corner by the old Ryman Auditorium, the original home of The Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee. I was a freshman student at David Lipscomb College that fall. Tickets to the Opry were usually available and reasonable at the Ryman Box Office door if you arrived early. I saw some of the great country stars perform like Granpa Jones, Minnie Pearl, Roy Acuff, Gentleman Jim Reeves, The Carter family and Mr. Johnny Cash. I became more understanding of new college co-eds, listening intently to giggling Fayette High School classmates, Miss Posey, Miss Barton or their girlfriends, motoring home for Christmas- Spring breaks in the 98 Green Machine. I decided at the end of my freshman year to transfer to the University of Alabama. The Green Machine and I missed the Ole Rymn Opry shows but silly Co-eds on road trips, we didn't miss at all. > "SO WE MOVED ON"

#### **AUGUST 23, 1962 TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA**

Oh My Lord, Where Do I Begin Here! > "DIXIE'S FOOTBALL PRIDE"

The Green Machine and I "grew up" to a degree at the University of Alabama with attractions available at 5 Points Jungle Club, Frank's Joint @ the GM&O Railroad, Southern Lounge next to Johnny's Cafe and yes, Woods Hall on the weekends. I got to meet and greet certain noted personalities such as a Mr. Perkins who followed the "Bear" and another guy called Namath at UA. The most important personality that used the fine facilities of my green machine was a Miss Davis from Jackson,Al. She was very impressive like my rocket eight Olds. Oddly enough, the campus was so small then you could actually hear the Crimson Tide football team practicing at night on Hackberry Lane. Mr. Perkins and I rode the Green Machine many times to Tuscaloosa High School as seniors in 1965 for our student teaching course. I was blessed the Big Green Machine could not talk.

-----"SO WE MOVED ON"

#### **JULY 30, 1966---" THE MARRIAGE EVENT"**

The bride, Miss Davis was very beautiful strolling towards me at Jackson First United Methodist Church. My dad was best man and mother was striking in her blue chiffon dress. We made it through the reception and Clementine McGowin drove us over to Mr. Walter McGowin's home where the car was secretly stored.

It was as hot as a pepper sprout, humidity in the stratosphere, both of us- stranded in a garage holding the "Great Green Machine". Having forgot my car keys, I reassured my new bride, nee Miss Davis wearing a white pill box hat that we would soon be on our way to Dauphin Island. In my wedding day haste I left the ignition keys with the father of the groom, my loving dad. Clementine, the Maid of Honor found him shortly before he pulled out of the Jackson Motel and brought the keys. I fired up the Syrup Man's fine car again. We were on our way across the Tombigbee River Iron Bridge to start our new life. > "SO WE MOVED ON"

This great automobile took my heart, hand and soul as she motored a young couple for the birth of their children in 1969 and 1972. By the summer of 1974 she began to smoke, lose power, stall and I knew the end was near with 125,000 miles on the odometer. Automobile drive trains at that time did not last as long as they do with today's technology. With Ed, my college friend helping, we took the engine apart in my driveway at Tuscaloosa's Springbrook Subdivision. We had it running good again after the overhaul and Ed made a offer to buy a few months later. The truth is I needed cash to pay for engine parts. I also came to the conclusion that all things, good or bad come to the final act and in this case the "fat lady was approaching the microphone. I can truthfully attest that The Syrup Man's Fine Car was more than a automobile for me. How does one love a machine as much as I did? What would cause a man to feel that way as if it was breathing or sweating? Don't ask me why—I cannot tell you why except to say "it" was extraordinary.

Ed called a couple months after he got home. "Bob, I sold your car a week ago and the new owner ran off the road down at Salitpa and hit a big pine tree. The car was totaled, now in the junkyard in Leroy-- Somehow the man survived with little injury". I said-- Ed, "The Big Green Machine always had a special purpose in it's journey as a "road warrior". I truly believe God wanted it to deliver one more good deed".

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